THE MAN HIGHER UP

By HENRY RUSSELL MILLER

CHAPTER XV.

TEMPTATIONS.

PAUL REMINGTON impatiently flung aside the book he had been trying to read. It was Sunday, and to Paul the first day of the week was always distinctly oppressive.

"It's no use. This day has got on my nerves. The time when myself and my dreams were all the company I needed is gone. I haven't seen her for two days, and I can't wait another day, another hour, another minute."

A half hour later Paul was ushered into the Sanger drawing room. Eleanor not appearing at once, he wandered through an open door into the music room, at one end of which had been installed a small pipe organ.

And Paul of the many talents, without being a great musician, knew how to make the organ respond to his soul's mood. He seated himself and began to play. His idle fingering gradually took form in a passionate, florid gust of melody that filled the big house. Then the stormy mood died away, and the organ sang a weird minor refrain. Eleanor, entering unobserved by the player, stood leaning against a chair near him, regarding him with an odd look in which admiration and pity, perhaps a shade of contempt, mingled.

At last, without turning or ceasing his playing, he spoke. "I can't see you, but I know you are there."

"Lawyer, politician, orator, musician—the gods have been good to you," she murmured quizzically.

"Yes," he answered, with a trace of bitterness, "Jack of all trades and master of none, but first and above all Mrs. Gilbert's most sincere devotee. I'm constant in at least one thing— But you won't let me speak of that. Today I'm possessed of a thousand devils. Sing."

He opened a sheet of music before him and struck into the accompaniment, and Eleanor, standing where she was, sang.

Eleanor Gilbert could sing, and that afternoon she sang as she had never sung before, for in her singing that day she found expression for what she had never quite dared to put into words—the longing for something higher and better than had yet come into her life to fulfill the ultimate woman's mission, a longing which of late had been growing more and more poignant within her. As she sang her heart flooded with kindliness toward the handsome, romantic young man before her.

"I wish," she thought once when at the end of a verse the organ took up the refrain—"I wish I were your mother. I wonder can this be the beginning of love—and for you?"

Song followed song until at length Paul turned from the organ and faced her.

"Thank you," he said simply.

She rested her elbows on the back of the chair, folding her hands and dropping her chin on them.

"How are those devils now?"

"Gone, every one of them. You're the most eminently satisfactory person in the world. I came here restless, morbid, filled with dismal forebodings. You sing—the demons flee."

He folded his arms contentedly. "By the way, when are you going to let me propose?"

"Must I ever let you?"

"It is inevitable that I shall propose sooner or later, whether you consent or not. But I prefer to do it under the most propitious circumstances."

"They say you can judge of love by the sacrifices it is willing to make. What would you give up for me?"

"What would I give up? Everything."

"'Everything' is a big word, my friend," she answered skeptically. "Let's come down to facts, as Henry would say. Friends?"

He covered his face with his hands.

She pressed him almost fiercely. "Friends? Even your friend McAdoo?"

"For God's sake, don't!"

"What!" she said mockingly. "Then 'everything' doesn't mean everything?"

Slowly his hands fell to his side. His face was very white, his eyes unutterably weary.

"No; 'everything' doesn't mean everything. When he asked me to give you up I refused. If you should demand that I give him up I must make the same answer; otherwise I must be utterly contemptible. I forced my friendship on him against his will. If it means anything to him now I can't take it away from him."

"My dear friend," she said aloud gently, "I'm not tempting you, because I have nothing to offer you in exchange for the sacrifice. I'm only showing you what it means to care for an intensely selfish woman. And I—I should like to care for you, but I dare not. I'm too much like Mr. McAdoo. I can never let myself love any man with whom I am not first. And he hates me. It dates from a day eleven years ago when he saved my life." Paul looked up, astounded. "He has hated the memory of me ever since, I think. If I married you, sooner or later we should come to the place where you must hurt him or me. That would mean misery for us both. I can never think seriously of caring for you until he withdraws his objections to me—or until you are willing to give him up for me."

He made no answer. She went close to him and laid a hand gently on his arm.

"Don't you see?"

He caught her hand closely in both of his. "Do you think," he demanded fiercely, "do you think you could ever come to care for me?"

"I wish you could make me," impulsively.

"Then," he said, with sudden determination, "when you do we will teach him what a wonderful woman you are, and he will approve."

"And that would be the only way I could be, I think, for you could never cast him aside, and I could never ask you to—never let you."

She withdrew her hand gently from his ardent clasp.

"And now," she said brightly, with an air of dismissing the topic, "did you know that you are to dine with Henry and me tonight? And afterward you are to take me to church. The preacher is very dull, but at least listening to him will serve as a sort of penance for our sins."

After dinner, while Eleanor was out of the room, Sanger for the second time took Paul up into a high mountain and showed unto him all the kingdoms of the earth. These he intimated might become Paul's if only the latter would help him (Sanger) to drive the mulish, hot headed foes of industrial progress into utter and unending oblivion. Paul laughingly declined the honor. In the exalted mood following his conversation with Eleanor to resist temptation was easy.

"It comes too high," he laughed. "I've got to stick to McAdoo."

"Bring him along by all means. He would be a welcome addition to our goodly company. I've mentioned the matter to him myself, but he refused, owing to an unfortunate misapprehension of my motives. Perhaps he might be persuaded to reconsider his refusal."

Paul shook his head. "You don't know McAdoo."

The preacher proved to be as dull as Eleanor had predicted. For a few minutes Paul dutifully tried to fix his attention on the discourse, but he soon gave over the effort and fell to watching her. He noticed her looking queerly toward a retired corner in one of the galleries. He followed the line of her gaze and gasped in astonishment.

"Ye gods, Kathleen has brought Bob to church!"

"Is Miss Flinn with him?" she whispered. "Which one?"

"To the right. I'll let you into a secret. Kathleen is in love with Bob."

"Indeed!" she said indifferently.

But several times during the service she caught her gaze straying from the pulpit to the man in the gallery and the sweet faced woman beside him.

As he was leaving her Eleanor said: "Will you take me to call on Miss Flinn?"

"Gladly! I'm sure you and she will become good friends."

For the next few days Paul saw Eleanor daily. She was very kind to him, and he was therefore lifted into the seventh heaven. He took Eleanor to call on Kathleen early in the week. His prophecy that they would become good friends was not fulfilled, at least immediately. Kathleen, with a self consciousness foreign to her, saw in Eleanor's honest efforts to please her only patronage, and Eleanor, chilled, was convinced that the older woman disliked her. Kathleen returned the call a few days later, but at that time Eleanor had left the city to spend the week end with her cousin, Mrs. Dunmeade.

Twenty-four hours in the governor's mansion made Eleanor regret her visit. The beautiful sympathy and simplicity of the Dunmeade household, by their very contrast recalling her own unhappy marriage, made her life seem unutterably empty. The afternoon of her second day at the capitol she had gone to Mrs. Dunmeade's sitting room and had surprised the governor there romping with the children while his wife looked smilingly on.

Eleanor, unnoticed and feeling her presence in the pretty little group a profanation, tiptoed back to her room, where she brooded disconsolately on her loneliness. Not until the governor's footsteps sounded along the hallway did she venture to return to Mrs. Dunmeade. The youngest child, a little boy just learning to walk, was rubbing his eyes sleepily, and Eleanor, taking him into her arms, crooned a slumber song to him while Mrs. Dunmeade sewed.

"I always make the little ones' clothes myself," Mrs. Dunmeade explained.

Eleanor nodded understandingly. "I know. I would myself if I had babies of my own, and I wouldn't leave them to a nurse." She held the little sleeper closer. "I understand now how you could leave your beautiful home and all your old friends to come here."

"It was a little hard at first," Mrs. Dunmeade said softly, so as not to disturb the baby's slumber, "but I soon got over that. We've been here six years now, and I'll hate to leave it. I've had John and the children and our old friends, the best of them at least, visit us often. Occasionally, too, we meet very interesting people. By the way, we are to have one such for dinner this evening, one of your city's politicians, Robert McAdoo."

Eleanor almost dropped the child in her astonishment. "Robert McAdoo!"

"You know him, then?" Mrs. Dunmeade's question convicted her of duplicity, since Paul Remington had written her, confiding to her a little of his trouble.

The child stirred uneasily, and Eleanor hummed a few bars of the slumber song before she answered.

"Yes. I've met him three times in my life. And he hates me."

Later in the afternoon the governor came in, accompanied by Murchell, who had left the municipal campaign in Adelphia to be at a conference with Robert McAdoo.

Dusk had fallen when the little group broke up to dress for dinner. Mrs. Dunmeade went with Eleanor to the latter's room.

"How pretty may we look tonight?" Eleanor asked smilingly.

"Our very prettiest," Mrs. Dunmeade smiled back.

"But won't Mr. McAdoo"—

Mrs. Dunmeade interrupted laughingly. "My dear, you don't know the American man. If you've never seen Robert McAdoo in the evening I promise you a surprise. You'll forget the mill hand and tough politician."

"Then he is a tough politician?"

"Judge for yourself tonight." And Mrs. Dunmeade with a twinkle in her eyes left Eleanor alone. The latter proceeded to make a very careful toilet.

When she descended to the library she found Murchell there alone. He greeted her with a courtly bow.

"Will you allow an old man to say that you are a very beautiful young lady, Mrs. Gilbert?"

She dropped him a courtesy. "I assure you, I'm not half so good as I'm good to look at."

"But I expect you to be. You mustn't disappoint me."

She shook her head, laughing, and promptly changed the subject.

"Who are these dignified gentlemen looking down on us? Governors?"

"Yes—that is"— And beginning with the portrait of the state's first governor, a distinguished Revolutionary soldier and statesman, he guided Eleanor around the room, telling her briefly what each man had done or failed to do. It was not always an honorable tale. The last, hung in an obscure corner, was Dunmeade's, painted and hung during his first term. Eleanor studied it in silence for a few moments.

"He's a good man, isn't he?" she asked at last.

Murchell answered with deep feeling. "The best I know and the most misunderstood."

The governor and his wife entered.

"Is it a secret?" the latter asked gayly. Mrs. Dunmeade was very happy that evening.

"Mr. Murchell has been telling me about our governors," Eleanor answered, concealing her disappointment over the interruption. "I wonder whose picture will be hung there next."

She saw a quick, meaning glance pass between Murchell and the governor's wife. But for answer Mrs. Dunmeade merely laughed and said evasively, "Oh, one never knows what a day may bring forth in politics."

They were chatting before the governor's portrait when the tinkle of the doorbell was heard. Eleanor, with amused expectancy, stepped back into the corner where she could not be seen by Bob at once.

He entered, and Eleanor, warned as she had been by Mrs. Dunmeade, could hardly repress a start of surprise. His manner as he met their cordial welcome was neither repelling nor eager, but rather the quiet dignity of a man who was sure of his footing. Eleanor found herself rejoicing that she had not attempted to patronize him during his call.

"I believe you have met Mrs. Gilbert," Mrs. Dunmeade said when the first greetings were over.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE FORCE.

BOB whirled sharply. As he faced her the blood rushed to his cheek and his eyes glinted in angry surprise. In an instant, however, he answered with perfect composure:

"Twice, I believe. I hardly expected to meet you here, Mrs. Gilbert."

"Three times, I'm sure," she said pleasantly. "It's very stupid, but really all I can think of is that trite old saying that the world is very small, Mr. McAdoo."

Bob's sense of humor came to his aid as he looked at the woman to cast whom and her influence out of his life he had come to find a weapon. He laughed.

"I should say the world's size depends upon whether you are trying to find or avoid a person."

Her face lighted up mirthfully. "Come, Mr. McAdoo. We are under the white flag here. I appeal to the governor. Cousin, to my rescue, for the sake of your household's peace. Mr. McAdoo and I always quarrel."

"Then I solemnly declare a truce," laughed the governor. "But I doubt her need of my protection. I fancy this young lady is quite capable of caring for herself, eh, Mr. McAdoo?"

"Quite!"

"That's very generous," she smiled. "It speaks well for a successful truce, I hope?" And she held out her hand with pretended hesitation.

His hesitation was genuine; but, yielding to the necessity, he took her slender white hand into his big strong one—the hand, as it flashed across her mind, that had once snatched her from a hideous death. Perhaps her smile became more kindly than she intended, for he dropped her hand as though it had been a hot coal.

"And now," Mrs. Dunmeade said promptly, "peace having been established all around, let us go in to dinner." She took Bob's arm and led the way into the dining room.

At dinner Bob sat opposite Eleanor, to his considerable discomfort at first. Perhaps Mrs. Dunmeade saw this, for she guided the talk to subjects which allowed him to be the audience. And after awhile his discomfort was forgotten in his interest in the conversation and in his covert study of Eleanor, especially in his study of Eleanor. He watched her critically that he might learn, if possible, the secret of her influence over Paul. His study forced him to admit very grudgingly that any man might find it hard to resist her charm.

"Any man of Paul's temperament, that is," he corrected himself hastily. And he began to doubt the success of his mission to the capital in its ultimate purpose.

Finally Mrs. Dunmeade turned to Bob. "Tell us, how is your campaign progressing?"

"There is considerable opposition."

"If your friends' good wishes count for anything," she said kindly, "you will win. We're all anxious to see you elected."

"One good indication," Murchell added, "is the viciousness of the newspaper attacks. They overstep all bounds. That courthouse story, for instance—I personally know that you had nothing to do with it."

"No; I had nothing to do with it."

"Surely there must be some way to stop such stories," said Eleanor.

"What business is it of yours?" Bob wanted to say roughly. Instead he said grimly: "Yes. Bribe the owners."

"Who are the owners of the paper that published the courthouse story?" she asked, not seeing or not understanding the danger signals flashed across to her by Mrs. Dunmeade.

Bob was tempted. To tell her the truth, to shame and hurt her before her friends, would have been an incense of sweet savor to his hostility. But he caught Mrs. Dunmeade's pleading look.

"The opposition," he said carelessly. He was repaid by a grateful look from his hostess.

"How do you arouse a people, Mr. McAdoo?" Eleanor inquired quizzically.

"Denounce the other side," he said shortly.

"Then in politics one depends for success on the faults of the other side rather than on one's own virtues?"

"Precisely."

"No, no," the governor protested kindly. "Mr. McAdoo isn't just to himself. The truth is while he has been at the head of the Steel City organization"—

"Is that a polite name for boss?" Eleanor interrupted.

"I'm afraid it is," the governor returned pleasantly. "I was going to say that under Mr. McAdoo's leadership the district attorney's office in your county has been most efficiently and honestly conducted and the present city administration is the cleanest, most economical the city has ever known."

"Why are you so sure of being elected?" Eleanor asked.

"Because I play the better game."

Suddenly Murchell, who had taken little part in the conversation, leaned forward and leveled an accusing finger at Bob.

"That's not true," he said sternly. "It's false to the people of your city and to yourself. You're the shrewdest and boldest politician in this state. But your knowledge of the game alone would never make you mayor of your city, nor will it be due to the fact that you are a boss with an ironclad machine at your back. You're more than a boss. You have made yourself the leader of the people in their fight against the railroad-steel trust. Therefore you will win. Not the master politician or the boss of a machine will be elected, but Robert McAdoo, leader of the people. The responsibility will be yours, but it will not be your victory, but the victory of the cause you represent, the victory of the force."

"The force?" Bob and Eleanor exclaimed together.

Murchell's hand dropped to the table. His lean, haggard face showed a red spot in each cheek. "Yes, the great social force in whose grip we all are; the force that makes the man, the social unit, find his happiness, his welfare, in the happiness and welfare of his brethren, of society; the force that has given John Dunmeade strength to struggle, libeled and misunderstood, against those who defy this principle of the universe. The force that has placed in you—forgive my bluntness—the crassest egoist I have ever known, the spirit to defy and fight the same enemy of your brethren. The force that makes you and John Dunmeade, by grace of a common enemy, necessary to each other, and makes you both necessary to the people of this state. The force that will give you the victory."

The old politician stopped, his black eyes gleaming fiercely at Bob through the shaggy eyebrows. Of what was going on within him Bob's masklike expression gave no hint as he met Murchell's gaze impassively. He shifted his glance to the others and found that he, not Murchell, was the target for their eyes. Upon Dunmeade's gentle face was written the exaltation of the martyr who sees into the beyond and holds his triumph; upon his wife's countenance, both triumph and understanding. Eleanor was looking at him with an expression Bob could not understand, though he knew that for once it was not hostile. He turned again to Murchell, an ugly glitter in his eyes.

"Do you add the force that led you, the first of the school of corporation politicians, to create the very conditions we are fighting?"

Murchell did not flinch. "No, I have seen of those who wielded power, and heretofore I have been the greatest optimist of my day. I add the force that will lead you two to repair the damage I have done."

Bob's mouth twisted into his sardonic grin. "It's a hopeless theory, Mr. Murchell. You make us all blind automatons. You take away from me—the crassest egoist you have ever known—my individuality, my reason for existence, my self, and you give me in exchange a species of sublimated socialism."

"Yes," Murchell said quietly, "the socialism of Christ when he commanded 'Love thy neighbor as thyself.'"

"Your force is as inexorable as God!"

"The force is God," Murchell answered quietly.

"Yes," Mrs. Dunmeade said gently, "for God is love."

Bob turned to her, and the sneer faded from his mouth. "What does the force give us in exchange for our selfishness? What have I, reduced to an automaton, to make life and action worth while?"

"The happiness of seeing your fellows happier," she replied, "and live."

He broke into a rasping, mirthless laugh. "Pardon me," he said, recovering himself. "I'm not laughing at you or your force, but at a joke I had forgotten. I was introduced to your force two months ago."

"No, my friend," Murchell said, "at your birth."

When the men were alone Bob proceeded to explain his visit.

"Now that we have reached a verdict convicting me of conspiring to uplift humanity," he began, "let's get down to business if you're ready to hear me."

"We are ready."

"The other day," Bob went on, "I had an interview with Henry Sanger, Jr. The interview was at his request. He is backing Harland. Harland doesn't know it, but there's no doubt about it. Sanger was very frank. He informed me that he and his 'fellow investors' intend to break with you openly and finally and to select the next governor, legislature and senator. He came to propose that I join with them. He held out big inducements. He offered to contribute to my campaign fund; also to place the next governorship under my control and to put me at the head of the new state organization, subject to certain limitations, of course.

"I told him that I proposed to line up with you." Bob paused, looking at the others inquiringly.

"I suppose you didn't leave your campaign merely to tell us this," Murchell said.

"No. As I told Sanger, I choose to join you people. But, of course, my doing so depends upon certain conditions. I must name the next candidate for governor," Bob said coolly.

"That," Murchell said decidedly, "we can't consent to unless your candidate meets with our approval. Have you some one in particular in mind?"

"Yes; Remington."

"Paul Remington!" Dunmeade exclaimed. "I had suspected"— He paused.

"His ambition must fly high," Murchell said, looking at Bob in surprise.

"No. He knows nothing of the object of this visit. I don't suppose he has even thought of himself in connection with the next governorship."

"Nor am I prepared for the suggestion," Murchell said thoughtfully. "Can he be elected?"

"He stands as good a chance as any one we could pick. He's the most popular man in the Steel City. He has a clean personal record. He's well and favorably known over the state. He has spoken in every county. He's a good campaigner, and his youth is in his favor."

"Then can we trust him?" Murchell demanded, looking at Bob keenly.

"Yes," Bob answered firmly, almost too firmly, Murchell thought.

"Well," Murchell said slowly, "you may be right; but, frankly, while I like and admire Remington, I haven't absolute confidence in him. He's brilliant and enthusiastic, but he lacks stability of character, and I doubt if he really has a high conception of political responsibility. The next governor will have need of these qualities, as the present governor has had need of them." He laid his hand kindly on Dunmeade's arm.

"If we choose him I'll be back of him," Bob said, meeting Murchell's glance steadily. "And—I know him better than you do—if I think there ever is or can be the least doubt as to his good faith or nerve I will withdraw my request."

The governor reached his hand across the table to Bob. "Your word is good enough for me."

For an hour they discussed the matter in detail, Bob remaining very firm in his demand. At last Murchell's consent was won.

"Then it's settled," he said. "Let us hope we never regret it."

"You will never regret it, Mr. Murchell," Bob replied earnestly. "If I should change my mind about Remington I'll support whomever you choose."

"Do you really believe there is any chance of your changing your mind?"

"I hope not," Bob answered quickly. "In the meantime, gentlemen, be so kind as to keep this quiet for the present. I prefer that Remington shouldn't hear of it at once."

"You have no objections to my wife knowing, I hope," said Dunmeade. "I have no secrets from her, you know."

"No. But please see to it that Mrs. Gilbert knows nothing about it—especially Mrs. Gilbert," Bob added emphatically.

DUNMEADE looked at Bob curiously, but asked no questions. "Certainly your wishes shall be respected," he said courteously.

He rose from the table. Bob relucfamily accompanied the others into the library. As they walked through the hallway they heard shouts of childish merriment. At the door of the library they halted to watch a pretty little group, Eleanor sitting on the floor romping with the three children, considerably to the disarrangement of hair and gown, while Mrs. Dunmeade and a maid looked laughingly on. Eleanor, flushing slightly, hurriedly rose to her feet, holding the baby. Now, a beautiful woman never appeals so strongly to a man as when she has a little child in her arms.

"Come, you children," Mrs. Dunmeade commanded with mock severity, "to bed with you. These youngsters, Mr. McAdoo, have the run of the house, you see."

But before the child was turned over to the waiting maid Eleanor, conscious—shall we confess it?—of the charming picture she made, must take him to his father to receive the good night salute. Next Murchell must pay his homage. Then she looked, hesitating, toward Bob, who stood in the background. As he read her intent in her audacious smile he felt the blood rise uncomfortably to his face.

"Come," she declared gayly; "you shan't be neglected, Mr. McAdoo."

She carried the child to Bob and held him up. Bob, with awkward unfamiliarity, extended his big hand toward the mite of humanity. But the little one refused to accept the advances, clinging tightly to Eleanor's neck and regarding the big stranger with frightened eyes.

"Do you know what they say of children's instincts?" she whispered softly, that the others might not hear. Bob flushed even more deeply.

It was a little thing, but it added fuel to the flame of his angry resentment against her.

She gave the child over to the maid. "Children are dears, even if they are hard on one's hair," she laughed as with the inimitable grace which a woman imparts to the operation she replaced the wisps of hair disordered by the youngster's irreverent hands.

When the damage had been repaired Mrs. Dunmeade suggested, "Won't you sing for us?"

"Yes," Eleanor replied without reluctance, real or affected.

As her voice rose and fell in some simple song, chosen, had Bob only known it, to fit his own limited comprehension, his eyes fixed their gaze sternly on the singer. His arms were folded across his chest, each hand gripping its fellow's biceps, as he had sat through the convention when Paul's impassioned voice, appealing to something higher in the audience than the orator himself felt, had found a lodgment where least expected. The easy unconcern with which he had taken his place among these people fell from him. Here in the somber old library, fragrant with memories, in the presence of the gentle souled Dunmeades, listening to the beautiful, cultured, well poised woman who was singing—here was no place for him! "Let me get back to my heelers and my fighting, where I belong!"

Murchell rose to leave. First he held out his hand to Bob.

"No use coming with me. Your train isn't due for two hours yet. My friend, you won't regret tonight. You'll hear from me in a day or two."

To Eleanor he said: "Thank you for your singing. It has done me great good—and to know you too. I repeat, you are a very beautiful young lady and as good as you are good to look at, I'm sure. My dear, I'm an old man"— And he bent over to kiss her. A very becoming flush came to her cheek.

"You two can take care of each other for a few minutes, can't you?" Mrs. Dunmeade said to Eleanor and Bob. "We never leave this dear friend until he has passed the door." So Robert McAdoo and Eleanor Gilbert were alone together once more.

"Well, force—or shall we say the force?—seems to take an intimate interest in our affairs. The last time we met we both determined never to see each other again, and now"—she waved her hand in an expressive gesture—"suppose you come over here by the piano. It's awkward trying to talk across a big room like this."

He crossed the room and stood by the piano, looking down on her.

"Aren't they the dear, good people?" she said earnestly. "And don't they make you feel mean and small? They always do me, I know. Or," she added, with the irritating uplift of her brow, "do you ever feel small and mean?"

"I admit their goodness."

She saw that for some reason his temper was slipping its leash. She took a keen delight in her power to anger him. Daringly she tried to torment him further. "Do you know," she leaned forward on the music rack, resting her chin on her folded hands and smiling up at him, "I'm almost tempted never to quarrel with you again."

"I don't want peace with you!" he cried roughly.

"No," she laughed, "I know you don't. That's one good reason why I should yield to temptation. But I'm not sure that I want to quarrel with you, aside from that. The last twenty-four hours I've learned a good many things. I begin to think you're not half so black as you have been painted, Mr. McAdoo."

"I don't want your good opinion. Stick to the old one. I'm all you thought me and more."

"Then do you dislike me merely because Mr. Remington cares, or thinks he cares, for me, or do you really hate me for myself?"

"Mrs. Gilbert, I really hate you for yourself."

"I knew it." Amusement was not written quite so plainly on her face as it had been. "Why?"

"That's the irony of it," he exclaimed bitterly. "I hate you because you are beautiful, because you are witty, because you have courage, because you are the only person I have ever met that I'm not a match for, because you have forced me to change my plans. I hated you when I first saw you and saved your life, Mrs. Gilbert. I hate you so thoroughly that I have come to this decision—either Paul Remington gives you up or he gives me up. If he marries you he goes out of my life once and for all. Now you may gloat," he sneered. "I deserve to have you know the truth. It's my just punishment for not being able to beat a woman."

"How you must hate me! I don't understand it. What you say almost makes you contemptible. Surely you can't mean that merely because your petty, childish vanity is hurt you are willing to sacrifice not only my possible happiness, which, of course, does not count, but also the happiness of a man you have called friend. Surely you're not so small and weak as that!"

Then his anger slipped its leash entirely. The red veil that had come before his eyes when he fought Haggin fell again. He was obsessed by a savage lust to hurt the woman before him, to deal her a blow that she would feel to the uttermost. His words fell slowly, cuttingly, with cruel distinctness.

"Oh, for that I have all the justification I need. You're not to be trusted with him. You're beautiful. You're the sort that has power over men. You have power over me. Seeing you sets me on fire with wild, insane longings. I have to keep my hate boiling or (good God, what am I saying? It's true) or love you!" He laughed harshly, wildly. "And the weaker the man the greater your power. I know your history, Mrs. Gilbert. You had one weakling under your influence and you let him go to hell without lifting a finger to save him."

Even in his savage anger Bob was startled by the effect of his cruel words. She turned white and shrank back as from a heavy physical blow. She drew a long, shuddering breath.

"Oh," she gasped. "I didn't believe you could be so cruel. I didn't believe you could be so cruel."

Slowly, unable to take her eyes from his, she rose and started uncertainly toward the door. She stumbled over a chair and would have fallen had he not caught her. She pushed herself away from him, shuddering.

"Don't touch me; don't touch me!"

He watched her, hardly able to comprehend the completeness of his brutality's triumph or the startling change in the woman who had mocked him so often until she passed out of the room. And as she went from his sight the sweetness of his savage joy turned to bitterness in his mouth—left him to face the supreme fact of his life.

A minute later, mechanically, ashamed and humbled by his own cruelty, he followed her into the hall. But she had gone upstairs to her room.

Seizing his hat and coat, without waiting to put them on or to say goodby to Dunmeade, he strode out into the night.

The mansion had been some time sunk in the midnight quiet when Mrs. Dunmeade, troubled by Eleanor's non appearance, tiptoed softly along the hall to her guest's bedchamber. Eleanor was in bed, her bright hair straying loosely over the pillow. She was staring hopelessly at the flickering gas jet. Mrs. Dunmeade saw no traces of tears.

She seated herself on the bedside. "My dear," she said gently, leaning over to stroke the pretty hair, "will you tell me what is the matter?"

Eleanor restively moved her head away. "Don't [illegible] me," she said bitterly. "I am not a child, but a woman nearly twenty seven years old, who has just been told she is responsible for the shameful life and death of her husband."

"Oh," Mrs. Dunmeade cried in shocked surprise, "did he taunt you with that? My dear, don't take it to heart. We all know you were the one sinned against."

"Yes, that was one of my pretty fancies, too," Eleanor said in the same bitter tone, "until tonight, when it opened my eyes. What he said was true. That's why it hurt. I let Leonard Gilbert go to hell and didn't lift a finger to save him. Only," she added wearily, "I would rather have heard it from any one but him."

"It is asking a good deal to ask you to forgive him; but, dear, I think he is suffering from some cause. Some day he will be sorry. He is a man who hasn't yet found himself," she concluded gently. "But when he does find himself he will be a vastly different man, and he will bring happiness to many."

Eleanor shook her head listlessly. "But not to me. He despises me, and he will never relent. But I have a resentment." The slow flush crept into her cheeks, and she put her arm over her eyes that Mrs. Dunmeade might not look into them.

Mrs. Dunmeade bent over impulsively and put her arms around her. "My dear child," she whispered understandingly, "has it come to you at last—and so?"

Eleanor suffered the caress for a minute and then gently released herself. "Won't you please go away? I would rather be by myself," she said wearily.

Years before a young girl, bruised under the ruthless heel of Bob McAdoo, had watched the night out. That night in the governor's mansion history repeated itself.

(Continued Next Saturday)